

# Writing a Literary Analysis

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# What Is Literary Analysis?

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- It's literary.
- It's an analysis.
- It's--
- *An Argument!*
- It may also involve research on and analysis of secondary sources.

# How Is It “Literary”?

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- Usually, a literary analysis will involve a discussion of a text *as writing*, thus the term literary, which means “having to do with letters.”
- This will involve the use of certain concepts that are very specifically associated with literature.

# Important Literary Concepts

- *The Basics*

- Plot
- Setting
- Narration/point of view
- Characterization
- Symbol
- Metaphor
- Genre
- Irony/ambiguity

- *Other key concepts*

- Historical context
- Social, political, economic contexts
- Ideology
- Multiple voices
- Various critical orientations
- Literary theory

# What Is an Analysis?

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- An analysis of a literary work may discuss:
  - How the various components of an individual work relate to each other.
  - How two separate literary works deal with similar concepts or forms.
  - How concepts and forms in literary works relate to larger aesthetic, political, social, economic, or religious contexts.

# How is Literary Analysis an Argument?

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- When writing a literary analysis, you will focus on specific attribute(s) of the text(s).
- When discussing these attributes, you will want to make sure that you are making a specific, arguable point (thesis) about these attributes.
- You will defend this point with reasons and evidence drawn from the text.

# Which is the Best Thesis/Claim Statement?

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- *Moby-Dick* is about the problem of evil.
- *Moby-Dick* is boring and pointless.
- *Moby-Dick* is about a big, white whale.
- The use of “whiteness” in *Moby-Dick* illustrates the uncertainty about the meaning of life that Ishmael expresses throughout the novel.

# How Do I Support a Thesis/Claim Statement?

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- Examples from the text:
  - Direct quotations
  - Summaries of scenes
  - Paraphrase
- Other critics' opinions
- Historical and social context
- Always remember to read carefully and highlight useful passages and quotes.



# What is a Secondary Source?

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- A book or article that discusses the text you are discussing
- A book or article that discusses a theory related to the argument you are making
- A book or article that discusses the social and historical context of the text you are discussing

# How Do I Find Secondary Sources?

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- MLA International Bibliography
- Dictionary of Literary Biography
- Discipline-specific sources
  - Example: *America: History and Life for American literature*
- Other search engines
- A bibliography that is part of your text
- Ask your instructor

# Integrating Secondary Sources

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- When you use secondary sources, be sure to show how they relate to your thesis/claim.
- Don't overuse any one secondary source, or for that matter, secondary sources in general
- Remember that this is your paper, your argument—the secondary sources are just helping you out.
- Never, never, never plagiarize. See the OWL handout on plagiarism for more information.

# Overview of Literary Analysis

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- When writing a literary analysis:
  - Be familiar with literary terms.
  - Analyze specific items.
  - Make an a argument.
  - Make appropriate use of secondary sources
  - Consult instructors and tutors for help when needed.

# Literary Analysis Prompt

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- In a well-written essay that uses MLA Style, explain how Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone* deal with the concept of fate and how it differs from chance and freewill. You will use Johnston's article to support your assertions.
- Length: 2 pages (double spaced)
- Due Date: Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> @ 11:59 p.m. to Turnitin.com



The End